

# FUTURE ANXIETY AND OPTIMISM AMONG GIFTED STUDENTS PARENTS

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## Abstract

*The main objective of this study was to investigate the difference between fathers and mothers of gifted students in anxiety and optimism towards their children, and the relationship between parental anxiety and optimism. The sample of the study was 47 father and 48 mothers. Parental anxiety and optimism scales were administered. Data is then analyzed using mean, t-test, and ANOVA. The results indicated no significance between fathers and mothers in both parental anxiety and optimism, and no difference in terms of number of children. The results also show a negative relationship between parental anxiety and optimism. Finally, results indicate that fear of future crisis was most frequent among parents, and yet, parents were highly optimistic. The results were then discussed in the context of social view.*

Keywords: Parental future anxiety, Optimism, Gifted Students.

The future of children concerns every parent. They try to fulfill what they missed with their children, especially if the son or daughter is talented and distinguished between his siblings and others. Here parents become in constant anxiety and fear of what might happen to their children in the future and hinder their lives. It is clear that all interpretations of anxiety by the psychological theories head towards the future one way or another. While the followers of the analytical and behavioral directions believe what is in the individual causes anxiety that is in their opinion directed to the fear of what might happen in the future because of some suffering in the distant or recent past. The humanitarians and especially existentialists believe anxiety for fear of non-existence and everything that is non-existential. This means any fear of what might happen to the individual in the future and lead to a threat to his/her existence with death, or economic or social disaster, that might lead to losing of his excellence in achievement or in status or any cherished or pride matter.

Some previous studies that were available to the researcher mostly focused on addressing anxiety in general and its correlation with different variables. Ahmad (1989) conducted a study in Egypt to identify the relationship between anxiety and academic performance of university students and predict the impact of anxiety on academic achievement. One of the most important results is that there is a relationship between anxiety and academic achievement. Another study conducted by (Abdul Khaliq et al, 1989) on the differences between anxiety and depression among students of the University of Alexandria, Egypt, where the results of this study showed no differences between the two groups in both anxiety and depression. Radwan (1991) studied a group of male and female students from the Faculty of Education at the University of Zagazig. The results showed there were a difference between male and female students. Finally, Dahlan (1423) confirmed in the findings of a study a relationship between anxiety and the psychosomatic symptoms among a group of outpatient children in Mecca. There are some studies made available to the researcher that investigated future anxiety. Hamza (2005) investigated future anxiety for children of abroad-working families to identify the difference in anxiety among children whose parents traveled to work abroad and children who parents have not. The results showed a difference between the two groups in the physiological, emotional, mental and social aspects that were contained in the scale used in this study. Working abroad families children were more concerned about the future. In a study of (Sherbini, 2006) on the correlation of some variables to the fear of the future and the overall self-efficacy and the needs of mothers of mentally challenged children in Egypt. The results showed a significant difference between mothers of children living out campus and mothers of resident children of rehab Schools, and mothers of mentally challenged children enrolled in regular schools in fear of the future, and that depends on the mothers' age and children' age variables. On the other hand, the results did not show significant differences in the fear of the future in terms of number of children and gender. Moreover, about the future anxiety among some members of the Arab community in Norway, Blkilani (2008) investigated self-esteem and the relationship of future anxiety of the Arab community living in Oslo, where the results indicated a high degree of future anxiety of members of the sample and negative correlation between self-esteem future anxieties.

To shed light on the bright side of life, optimism, some studies are trying to identify the degree of optimism among the samples of students and parents. Chang (1996) studied the differences between living in optimism and pessimism among a group of Americans of Asian, European, and Caucasians descents for a university students. Study used a sample of (111) in each group. The results showed that Asian Americans were more pessimistic,

used more of avoidance ways, and withdraw during confrontations of the factors leading to pessimism. The second group had low degree of pessimism compared to the first group, yet, the physical symptoms were more visible when living or confronting factors leading to pessimism. Trying to learn future anxiety and unrealistic optimism, Dewberry (1990) verified the relationship between optimism, pessimism, and anxiety on a sample of students in England. Results indicated there is a negative relationship between the feelings of female students about some of the negative situation they faces and their unrealistically optimism during the occurrence of the actual situations. The author has concluded that anxiety towards a negative situation mostly affects the optimism and pessimism toward this situation. To see the effect of optimism and neuroticism on the compatibility of older women, Boland and Cappeliez (1997) attempted to verify the relationship between optimism and some demographic variables with a study sample of (109) women over sixty years of age who have been interviewed for a period of 3 months. Results showed a relationship between optimism and those variables. In addition, the ability to predict living under pressures and being satisfied, through high optimism and low neuroticism of women. Myers and Steed (1999) tried to verify the relationship between dispositional optimism, dispositional pessimism, repression coping, and trait on a sample of (143) aged between 18 and 47 years in Britain. Results showed a relationship between the signs of repression, also found a decrease in anxiety among optimistic individuals. Thus, researcher thinks that the difference here is due to the overlapping optimism and pessimism in the scales used, which makes it difficult for researcher to study each variable separately. Another study by (Schweizer et al, 1999) showed a correlation between positive expectations, social optimism, and psychological happiness on 200 people in Germany. Therefore, optimism can be generally expected for each positive result obtained by the individual in life. Balbaid (1429) aimed to identify the relationship between optimism, pessimism, and career satisfaction on a sample of 107 counselors between teachers public education in Qunfudah district. Study results showed that there is a significant relationship between optimism and job satisfaction, while the relationship was negative between pessimism and job satisfaction. Results also showed no significant differences in both optimism and pessimism among counselors according to the place of work and experience, but there were a difference between these two variables in terms of monthly income, where difference was found in optimism between groups with a monthly income of more than ten thousand riyals. Moreover, a study on methods of family upbringing and its relationship to each of optimism and pessimism among a sample of students in intermediate and secondary schools in Jazan, Alharbi (1429) aimed to verify the relationship between family-upbringing and both optimism and pessimism, and predictability of both optimism and pessimism through treatment methods within the family. The sample was (273) female students and (356) male students. The results showed a relationship between optimism and the type of treatment by the father and mother in the dimensions scale used: physical abuse, deprivation, cruelty, humiliation, and a notice of guilt, and the preference of brother and spoiling. The study also showed a statistically significant differences between male and female students in each of optimism and pessimism where males were more optimistic.

#### Problem of the study:

One of the most common symptoms of anxiety visible on parents is avoiding work and activity, especially if it is related to their children and their future. Thus, parental anxiety and optimism are important factors in parental frustration or reassurance as what may be facing their children, especially gifted ones. This helps providing them with proper support. and in a time when we see interested researchers pay attention to innovativeness and talent and some variables associated with them , we note the scarcity in interest in the future of talented and even ordinary students and the extent of parental anxiety for the future of their sons and daughters . Due to the absence of Arab and non-Arab studies, to the best of researcher's knowledge, about the future of gifted children by their parents highlights the problem of the current study.

#### Questions of the study:

1. Are there any significant differences between mothers and fathers in both parental anxiety and optimism about the future of their talented children in the intermediate school level?
2. Are there differences between mothers and fathers in both anxiety and optimism about the future of their talented children in terms of the number of children?
3. Is there a relation between parental anxiety toward gifted children and optimism among fathers and mothers?
4. What is the most prevalent signs of parental anxiety about the future of the talented children of both father and mother?
5. What is the most prevalent signs of optimism among both fathers and mothers about their talented children's future?

**Objectives of the study:**

1. Identifying the most common signs of both parental anxiety and optimism about the future of talented students.
2. Identify the differences between mothers and fathers in parental anxiety about the future of each of the children.
3. Identify the relation between each of the parental anxiety and optimism for the fathers and mothers of gifted students.
4. Propose some recommendations that could contribute to reducing the level of parental anxiety and improve the degree of optimism among parents about the future of their gifted children.

**The importance of the study:**

The importance of the study is derived from the importance of the gifted students group as they have a role in the developing the society which they live. Future anxiety and optimism for students have a significant impact in reassuring parents and make them content, thus continue to provide appropriate support for their gifted children. The study is an important step to detect the most common signs of both parental anxiety and optimism toward gifted children's' future and the relationship between them, and the difference between mothers and fathers in parental anxiety toward gifted children in intermediate school level.

**Terms of the study:****First: parental anxiety:**

Researchers identify parental anxiety as a relatively continuous fear by parents or a parent for the future of their children resulted from direct, indirect, or unreal experiences. It is the feeling of parents or a parent of fear for the future of their gifted children in many areas, such as the school, family, and scientific.

**Second: optimism:**

The researchers define it as the positive outlook of the person towards situations or achievement followed by hope and self-promise and good predicted towards it or towards others around it.

**Third: Gifted:**

Is the student who provides product whether intellectual or artistic or geometric or medical or in any other field. This product could be innovative or developmental (by adding or removing in the product or change its use). Gifted student is the one who can give evidence on his high performance in each of the mental, creative, psychological, academic, and leadership areas; so that it is required to make available programs and efforts in order to meet his/her needs. (Jerwan, 2002).

**Instrument of the study:**

First: parental anxiety scale: prepared by the researchers: Face Validity indicated that the instrument was valid. The alpha internal consistency reliability of full scale and subscales.

Second - optimism Scale: prepared by Abdul Khaliq (1996):

Pilot study was conducted for validity and reliability.

**The study sample:**

The study sample consisted of (47) father, (46) mother of gifted students in the intermediate level in Mecca. They have been identified as gifted according to the criteria established in the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia.

**Results of the study:**

First: What is the difference between fathers and mothers in both parental anxiety and optimism for the future of their gifted children?

Table (1)

Significance of differences between the means of the parents in parental anxiety

Group Name	T	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Statistical Significance
Father	47	2.06	0.47		
				0.12	No Statistical Significance
Mothers	46	2.05	0.42		

Shown in Table No. (1) There is no significant differences between mothers and fathers in parental anxiety about the future of their talented children.

These results agree with the (Abdul Khaliq et al, 1989) and (Abdul Halim, 2010) which showed no differences between male and female students in anxiety. In contrast, other studies such as (Radwan, 1991) and (Althunayyan, 1430) showed statistically significant differences in anxiety among students according to gender. With this simple difference in the results of some available studies and within the limits of the gender variable, we observed variation of the interesting factors to the anxiety of the samples members of these studies. Whereas in the current study, the sample was consisted of parents who are struggling for a bright future for their children and, in particular, gifted children.

The lack of significant differences between the parents according to the results of the current study and in accordance with what came in some theories (Okasha, 1986), (Miller , 1990) about the general reasons for anxiety. In addition to what Hamouda (1990) said on the sources of anxiety and focusing on all what threatens the safety of the individual and the safety of important persons for him as well as the surrounding situations. He confirms reassurance of parents to their gifted children scientific track and the efforts being made by officials of the Ministry of Education to help them growing and meet their needs.

Table (2)

The significance of differences between the means of the parents in optimism

Group Name	T	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Statistical Significance
Father	47	4.2	0.7		
				1.59	No Statistical Significance
Mothers	46	3.98	0.68		

Tables 2 shows, there are no significant differences between mothers and fathers in optimism about the future of their children gifted.

Given the result for the first part of the question, we see it is consistent with the result of the second part. This confirms that there is no significant differences between fathers and mothers in optimism about the future of their children. It also confirms lower readiness for pessimism among members of the sample in the parents, and that they are not exposed to fear and anxiety for the future of their gifted children. In addition to their reassurance to the existence of a set of positive traits the children have which will help them overcome many of the obstacles that they may be exposed in the future. for example, mental traits they have like the fast of learning and the ability to focus and the ability to meditate and the ability to creative thinking , curiosity , as well as other personal traits such as the power of insight , understanding and perseverance.

Second question: Are there any statistically significant differences in anxiety and optimism for the future of gifted children, according to the number of children in the family?

Table (3) the statistical significance of differences between the means of the parents in parental anxiety

Number of Children	Sum of Squares	Freedom Degree	Mean of Squares	F	Statistical Significance
Between Groups	148	2	0.074		
Within Groups	18.15	90	0.2	0.36	No significant difference
total	18.29	92	0.42		

Table (3) shows that there are no significant differences between mothers and fathers in parental anxiety for the future of gifted children according to the number of children in the family.

Table (4)

The significance of differences between the means of fathers and mothers Optimistic about the future of their children by the number of children

Number of Children	Sum of Squares	Freedom Degree	Mean of Squares	F	Statistical Significance
Between Groups	0.488	2	0.234		
Within Groups	45.09	90	0.501	0.47	No significant difference
Total	45.56	92			

As shown in table (4) that there are no significant differences among fathers and mothers in optimism for the future of gifted children in terms of the number of children in the family.

By looking at the tables (3 and 4) we find no statistically significant differences among members of the study sample in each of parental anxiety and optimism, according to the number of sons and daughters in the family. although the number of children in the family is not subjected to theoretical trend about the importance of birth order of the child, but implicitly, we can infer from the number of existing children within a family may make this order inevitable. As there is special attention for the child according to his position if he is the youngest or the only child. Contrarily, middle child might face pressure and oldest might face responsibilities. (Hariri and Emami, 1432)

Third: Is there a correlation between parental anxiety and optimism of both parents?

Pearson's coefficient link was used to verify the degree of relationship between each of the parental anxiety and optimism, and the quality of this relationship.

Table (5)

Illustrates the correlation between parental anxiety and optimism among members of the sample

Study Variables	F	correlation	Statistical Significance
parental anxiety	93	-0.41	0.01
optimism			

Shown in Table No. (5) That there is a negative correlation between each of the parental anxiety and optimism reached (- 0.41) degrees significance with a level of 0.01. This was a normal result according to the signs of anxiety in humans like feeling hopelessness and failure prediction and expectation of the worse. This is consistent with the sample of this study that scored low averages in parental anxiety and high averages in optimism as shown in the previous tables. In addition, the other counterpart to optimism, which is pessimism, is a main component of anxiety. Thus, results of this question were logical though it was intended to verify this finding of the study applied on parents, not on children.

Fourth question. What is the most sign of parental anxiety prevalent between both parents?

Table (6)

Averages and standard deviations of a signs of parental anxiety in order:

i	(Fathers)	Mean	Standard Deviation	i	(Mothers)	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Phrase of parental anxiety				Phrase of parental anxiety		
1	I fear for my son / daughter of disasters and tribulations that occur from time to time in this world	2.72	1.057	1	I fear for my son / daughter of disasters and tribulations that occur from time to time in this world	2.91	0.1007
2	Inevitably the world suffers from economic and other problems and my sons and daughters will get their share it	2.49	0.831	2	Inevitably the world suffers from economic and other problems and my sons and daughters will get their share it	2.76	0.673
3	I am worried about what might happen to my sons and daughters because of the lack of social support for them in the future.	2.43	0.827	3	I am worried about what might happen to my sons and daughters because of the lack of social support for them in the future.	2.5	0.863

4	I feel nervous when I think about the future of my sons / daughters.	2.36	0.87	4	I feel nervous when I think about the future of my sons / daughters.	2.46	0.836
5	I rule out the possibility that my son / daughter will get the career opportunities appropriate to his talent.	2.34	0.891	5	my sons and daughters not getting what they need of openness of mind in the future worries me	2.39	0.856
6	I feel bad when I remember that life is not going in favor of my sons and daughters.	2.26	0.826	6	The feelings of fear for the future of my sons / daughters increases year after year.	2.26	0.963
7	I fear for my sons and daughters to become dependent on others fulfill their needs in the future.	2.21	0.832	7	I rule out the possibility that my son / daughter will get the career opportunities appropriate to his talent.	2.26	0.8
8	my sons and daughters not getting what they need of openness of mind in the future worries me	2.13	0.969	8	My sons / daughters are unable to plan for their future.	2.26	0.855
9	I am so disappointment for not benefiting from the energy and capability of my son / daughter in the future.	2.13	0.969	9	I feel bad when I remember that life is not going in favor of my sons and daughters.	2.22	0.892
10	The lives of my sons and daughters will be filled with conflict with others.	2.09	0.717	10	I fear for my sons and daughters to become dependent on others fulfill their needs in the future.	2.2	0.859

The table number (6) refers to the top ten signs of anxiety to all of the fathers and mothers. Fear to a son of sedition and accidents came as the first sign of parental anxiety with a mean of 2.72 among fathers, and 2.91 among mothers. Note that both means were slightly higher than the average mean for this phrase that is estimated at 2.50. The type of anxiety here is closer to realistic anxiety that was referred to by psychoanalytic theory, and that is in light of the crises and natural disasters experienced by the world nowadays. Even part of Saudi Arabian is not immune to some natural disasters and rainfall and the flow of floods in some parts of the Kingdom and the ensuing damage. , in addition to what is happening in the world of the crisis has had a deep impact on all individuals in every society in line with the argument that the world has become a small village. Anxiety here extends from the present to the future, where current parents generations are in a state of extreme fear of what may happen to their children of harm and problems.

The second of the phrases are the fear of the economic problems. The economic factor is an influencing factor in human life at all times, especially at the present time that we sense its importance and fear its negative effects on our lives. Even though there was a discrepancy between both means of fathers and mothers in the degree of anxiety for the economic factor, coming in the second place in both groups refer to a logical order. Disasters often occur suddenly and causes damage and panic. Even if it is of an imagination. While economic problems or suffering from the economic situation often occurs gradually. The person puts efforts to interact with the economic suffering trying to face it. Finally, he gets used to it even if he fails in its battle against it. Despite this, parents do not accept such occurrence to their children, of course.

Came the third phrase of anxiety and fear of not receiving social support children in the future, whether they are members of the same family or from the near and distant communities alike.

The fragmentation of the family and the entry in the scope of the so - called nuclear families is a nightmare of the current generation of parents. The spacing and repulsion between family members is anxious for some people who experienced themselves what happens of differences and a rupture between brothers and sisters. Especially if some of these children are gifted. Gifted child usually suffers loneliness and isolation, moreover suffers from a lack of acceptance of those who surround sometimes. This contributes to increasing the distance between him and his siblings. This may extend for the worse when they fail to provide the support that he needs from them in the future. What gifted may be exposed to of neglect and lack of acceptance and support of his siblings may occur from others who do not welcome his talent pretext of jealousy and envy (Mohammed, 1423). Thus the probability of a lack of support for children in general, and gifted ones in particular considered an anxiety factor for every father and mother.

Fifth question: What is the most common sign of optimism among both fathers and mothers?

Table (7)

Averages and standard deviations to arrange a manifestation of optimism

i	(Fathers)	Mean	Standard Deviation	j	(Mothers)	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Optimism Phrases				Optimism Phrases		
1	I see the bright side of things	4.4	0.681	1	My life will be happier.	4.3	0.785
2	I feel tomorrow will be brighter.	4.34	0.815	2	there is always a better way	4.26	0.88
3	there is always a better way	4.34	0.962	3	I see the bright side of things	4.13	1.046
4	Time is hiding for me pleasant surprises.	4.34	0.984	4	Time is hiding for me pleasant surprises.	4.11	0.971
5	My life will be happier.	4.32	0.862	5	I feel tomorrow will be brighter.	4.09	0.865
6	Life looks beautiful.	4.4	0.681	6	Life looks beautiful.	4.07	0.975
7	Future will be happy.	4.23	0.984	7	Things will get better in the future.	4.02	0.954
8	I think about the future with optimism.	4.21	1.02	8	I see the relief will be soon.	3.96	0.698
9	The hopes or dreams will eventually come true.	4.17	1.007	9	The hopes or dreams will eventually come true.	3.98	1.016
10	I see the relief will be soon.	4	0.909	10	I think about the future with optimism.	3.96	0.868

Looking at table (7) and the order of the phrases of optimism clarify that there is a considerable resemblance between fathers and mothers in the order of phrases expressing optimism about the future of their gifted children's. Looking at the bright side of things in the first among fathers with a mean of \$ 4.40, which reflects high degree of optimism in this appearance. On the other hand, the phrases that expect happiness are the most common phrases with mothers. Predicting good in the coming days came in the second order of the phrases among fathers with a mean of 4.34 followed by the phrase of No misery in life and no life in misery ranked third



among fathers with a mean of 4.34. This phrase was in the second place among mothers. Seeing the bright side came in the third to mothers as well. Then phrases were shown successively in the table (7) pointing to the existence of a slight difference in the ranking of the two sets of fathers and mothers. The most important thing to refer to here is that all means were higher than the average means optimism that is estimated by 2.50.

Bottom line is that this study was concentrated in the verification of the difference in parental anxiety and optimism for the future of their gifted children. It is to give an insight on the extent of what might parents feel of anxiety and optimism for the future of their children, especially gifted ones, on the premise that family is an important part of the educational and guidance system and for these children. This part also projects the difference between fathers and mothers parental anxiety and optimism for the future in terms of the difference between the two groups in these two variables according to the number of children in the family.

The results of this study are positive and encouraging, yet, surrounded by caution at the same time. It no doubt reflects the vision of parenting that you look at things with fear and hope. Researcher can come up with recommendations in the light of the results of this study. The most important is to support the parental vision toward the future of gifted children during family counseling and through the development of appropriate preventive programs in schools and through the media. Such programs can contribute to the preparation of parents and gifted children and ordinary people and people with special needs as everyone has the need for psychological and immunization prevention against violence and crises and against disasters in multiple forms. Researcher suggests conducting further studies across different segments of the fathers and mothers of talented, especially that vary their talents, as well as different demographics they have. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

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